

The Progressive Farmer.

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CURRENT EVENTS: THE DRIFT OF THINGS AS WE SEE IT.

In North Carolina last week public interest centered in four things: the rise in price of cotton, Dr. John Bassett's South Atlantic Quarterly article on the negro question, the elections in the North and West on Tuesday, and the Panama revolution. We are not going to discuss the probable course of cotton prices further than to say that the outlook indicates that the price will not fall below ten cents again this season—and that's satisfaction enough for the farmer. We are printing on another page an interview with a Raleigh buyer who insists that the price will be 12½ cents before spring, but we shall not assume the responsibility of advising farmers to hold for that figure.

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Dr. Bassett's Firebrand.

Dr. John Spencer Bassett, of Trinity College, wrote for the November South Atlantic Quarterly an article, "Stirring Up the Fires of Racial Antipathy," which itself seems likely to do as much to stir these fires as any article, save one, that has appeared in North Carolina for a score of years. The head and front of Dr. Bassett's offending is not that he pronounced Booker Washington the greatest Southerner since Lee, but that his article is in effect a plea for the equality of the races, as fast as it may be brought about—and apparently for social equality, for the article is at least so worded as to suggest this, whatever Dr. Bassett may have intended it to imply. "Not even a black skin and a flat nose can justify caste in this country," he says. "The only solution reserved for us is the adoption of these children of Africa into our American life. In spite of our race feeling, of which the writer has his share, they will win equality at some time."

Knowing the reputation and record of Dr. Bassett as we do, we cannot believe that he, North Carolinian as he is by birth and breeding, recognized the full purport of his words. We cannot believe that he thought of the thousands of black men, low in intellect and low in morals, whom such utterances might fire with incendiary discontent and with hurtful aspirations. We cannot believe that he thought of the millions of white women to whom this aroused passion would mean increased peril. We cannot believe that he thought of the revolting amalgamation which would be the logical result of "equality."

It is hard for a Southern white man to discuss such a subject dispassionately. Amalgamation is the natural corollary of social equality. "Can you eat with a man at your table and not stop to talk with him?" writes a Southern woman in one of the November magazines. "And if you talk to him in your dining room, how can you avoid talking to him in your drawing room? If he talks to you socially, how can you forbid his talking to your family socially? If you have entertained him socially, how can you resent his aspiration for your daughter?" So the writer concludes that "miscegenation is the inevitable outcome of social equality"—and of miscegenation no right-minded white man thinks with composure. Dr. Edgar Gardner Murphy echoed the feelings of the South in this matter when he declared: "Rather than see anything which might look directly or indirectly toward the mutual assimilation or amalgamation of these races, I would prefer to see an utter end of both. Better a noble extinction than an ignoble perpetuation."

We do not believe, however, that the negro will ever equal the white man in intellect or ability. He is not merely an undeveloped race, but an inferior race. "By many writers," says Mr. Alfred H. Stone, "the fact is placidly ignored that the

negro is one of the oldest races of which we have any knowledge, and that its very failure to develop itself in its own habitat, is sufficient proof of its inferiority." We recall, too, that in Dr. Josiah Strong's book on "Expansion," this subject is very ably handled. The advanced and belated races, says Dr. Strong, are not traveling the same path. The negro race, for instance, at a given point in the path of progress, is not surrounded by the same conditions and beset by the same difficulties that the Anglo-Saxon encountered at that stage of development. Nor is it certain that the belated race will ever reach the same development that we have; different roads and different conditions probably mean different results. The white man invented his tools, and wrought out for himself his system of civilization, and the labor strengthened and developed him. The belated races to-day have no such task to perform, nor will they get the benefit from merely being born into civilization, that the white man got from actually making it.

But even if the negro were at some time inconceivably distant to become the white man's intellectual equal, we believe that the natural God-given racial antipathy would still keep the races separate. For the Southern protest against social equality, as Dr. Lyman Abbott says, is not a mere prejudice, but a just, natural, divine instinct for the preservation of the race.

We shall always have our freaks, of course, but all through the ages the race as a whole will undoubtedly be guided by this "natural, divine instinct." Theorists may call this "caste prejudice," if they will, and half-breeds like Prof. Du Bois may protest against it with stirring pathos, but to no avail. In its deeper meaning there will be no "equality." We are in no danger from that. On the contrary, we believe, with Dr. Edgar Gardner Murphy in the address from which we have already quoted, that "the only real danger lies not in any phase of the negro's wise and legitimate progress, but rather in the danger that the negro will know so little, will do so little, and will increasingly care so little about either knowing or doing, that this great black mass of his numbers, his ignorance, his idleness, and his lethargy, will drag forever like a cancerous and suffocating burden at the heart of our Southern life."

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The Panama Revolution.

By far the greatest event of last week, was the Panama revolution. Things moved swiftly down there. The people of the Isthmus of Panama declared themselves independent of the government of Colombia which had previously exercised sovereignty over them; the Colombian forces, after little show of resistance, retired; an American gunboat was sent to keep order about the ports, and on Friday the American consuls were instructed to recognize the three-days-old "Republic of Panama."

Of course, the Isthmian Canal trouble is at the bottom of all this. The canal is to be cut across the isthmus, and the isthmus has been, nominally at least, a part of Colombia, an alleged South American republic. But Colombia has long been subject to periodical revolutions; there has been no stable, permanent government. Nevertheless, the United States has recognized this government, and has honestly endeavored to deal with it in a decent, business-like way. We wished to build the canal across the isthmus, and this would have been of immense commercial benefit to Colombia. But its government, with an obstinate, dog-in-the-manger policy, demanded that we pay it for the privilege of building the canal, while granting it sovereignty over the country traversed. And as time went on, the greed of the Colombians increased. By the Hay-Herran treaty, they would have received \$10,000,000 outright and perpetual sovereignty, but this munificent offer only whetted their appetite for more.

They rejected the treaty, and demanded that we give them \$20,000,000, perpetual sovereignty, and a constantly increasing annual rental. This was the straw that broke the camel's back. The people of the Isthmus, seeing their own rights so outrageously disregarded, and their own future prospects so blighted, by the greedy adventurers of Colombia, resolved to shake off the shackles of that government. This they have done, and it looks now as if they have already achieved their independence. We trust that this means the early building of the long-discussed Isthmian Canal.

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Tammany's Return to Power.

Of the elections last week, that in New York City interested the largest number of people. And here Tammany won a sweeping victory. Two years ago, it will be remembered, this organization, so long in the ascendancy, became so notoriously corrupt and was so clearly in league with vice and crime, that a combination of Republicans and Independent Democrats, styled the Citizens' Union, triumphantly elected a fusion reform ticket. Seth Low, a Republican, formerly President of Columbia University, was chosen mayor, while among the Independent Democrats elected were Edward M. Grout, candidate for Comptroller, and Charles W. Fornes, candidate for President of the Board of Aldermen. It cannot be doubted that this fusion administration has made an excellent record, that it has given the city better government than Tammany has ever given it. But nevertheless Tammany now returns to power. Defeated two years ago by 36,000 majority, it won last week by 63,000.

And for this result three noteworthy influences are responsible. First, the personality of Mayor Low. A good man at heart undoubtedly, Mr. Low lacks tact, political skill, the quality of leadership; he is cold and unlovable. This caused a strenuous effort to prevent his renomination, and dampened the ardor of his supporters after he was named.

In the second place, party feeling was invoked in Tammany's behalf. The Democrats believed that the success of their State and National tickets next year would be menaced by the re-election of the Republican Low. As Mr. W. H. Russell, speaking for that large number of Independent Democrats who returned to Tammany, declared: "We are opposing Mr. Low, not because we do not believe that he has given the people of the city an administration which is fully entitled to their indorsement from the standpoint of efficiency, uprightness, and economy, but because as Democrats we are anxious to bring to an end the power of Roosevelt and Odell, and see ahead a first-class opportunity of accomplishing that desired result. It is our firm conviction that Mr. Roosevelt can not carry this State in 1904 unless a Republican mayor is elected in New York city this year."

The third influence which made for the Tammany victory was its nomination of Grout and Fornes to succeed themselves. Both had apparently proved themselves capable and trustworthy, and there was such confidence in their integrity that many voters who would not have supported ordinary Tammany candidates were won by this fine stroke of policy in taking over Grout and Fornes.

But a corrupt tree does not bring forth good fruit. For a time Tammany will undoubtedly conduct itself more decently than it did two years ago, but if the people relapse into their usual apathy, it will rapidly drift back to its former practices. This time it had the united support of the Barkeepers Association, and the practically unanimous opposition of the press and pulpit. It was over in the Tenderloin district, among the brothels and barrooms, that its victory caused most rejoicing. Its leader, the recognized head of the organization, grew up a saloon keeper.